

2020 MSHSAA FOOTBALL RULES MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS – COACHES

<u>IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:</u>	<u>OPEN</u>	<u>CLOSE</u>
• ON-LINE RULES REVIEW – Fall Sports	AUGUST 3	AUGUST 21
• FIRST ALLOWABLE PRACTICE	AUGUST 10	NA
• FIRST ALLOWABLE CONTEST	AUGUST 28	NA
• HEAT/HYDRATION-Mandatory Timeouts	AUGUST 28	SEPTEMBER 18
• POSTSEASON OFFICIALS RECOMMENDATIONS	SEPTEMBER 21	OCTOBER 14
• DISTRICT FOOTBALL (Class 1-6)	OCTOBER 30	NOVEMBER 14
• DISTRICT FOOTBALL (8man)	OCTOBER 30	NOVEMBER 21
• CLASS 1-5 QUARTERFINALS	NOVEMBER 20	NOVEMBER 21
• CLASS 6 SEMIFINALS	NOVEMBER 22	NOVEMBER 23
• CLASS 1-5 & 8man SEMIFINALS	NOVEMBER 27	NOVEMBER 28
• CLASS 6 STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS	NOVEMBER 28	NA
• CLASS 1-5 & 8man STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS	DECEMBER 4	DECEMBER 5

1. **ONLINE RULES MEETINGS REQUIREMENT – AUGUST 3 - AUGUST 21**

COACHES: All Coaches are required to complete the Football Online Rules Meeting. The online rules meeting may be completed through the MSHSAA website from (August 3- August 21, 2020). The online rules meeting for coaches can be located by logging on to your school's homepage of the MSHSAA website and selecting the "Online Rules Reviews" link located under the Education category.

2. **MSHSAA FOOTBALL MANUAL** - Coaches are reminded that the MSHSAA Football Manual is located on the MSHSAA web site on the Football Page. The MSHSAA Football Manual contains information you will need to be familiar with for both the regular season and postseason. There is no acceptable excuse for not knowing the information contained in the MSHSAA Football Manual. **The MSHSAA Football Manual and NFHS Football Rules Book are the two publications that provide the rules and regulation presiding over high school football in the state of Missouri.**

3. **RULES INTERPRETERS** – Football Rules Interpreters are available to coaches and officials for game rule interpretations – Emry Dilday (Southwest), Jim Rosen (St. Louis), George Bays (Southeast), Durant' Davis (Kansas City), Bob Lade (Northwest), Chuck Snow (Central). Please contact your local rules interpreter with rules questions prior to contacting the MSHSAA office.

4. **APPROVAL OF OFFICIALS** - MSHSAA By-Law 6.1.1 - officials shall be agreed upon by both schools at least 30 days before each contest. **The host school is responsible for making certain game officials are registered with the MSHSAA and to initiate the agreement on officials with the visiting school.** However, if the visiting school has not been provided the opportunity to approve the game officials, contact should be made with the host school to arrange for approval. Approval by both schools is to be obtained prior to employing officials. Officials shall be engaged by a written contract.

OFFICIALS - REGULAR SEASON AND POSTSEASON – Officials for football contests taking place during weeks 1-9 will be contracted by the host school and should have approval from the visiting school. **Week 10 (districts) officials thru the state championship games will be selected and assigned through the MSHSAA office.** It is important that each school completes the officials recommendation form on the MSHSAA Website under district entries for football by **October 14, 2020. Please recommend or not recommend officials by name of the Referee/Crew Chief.** Each school may choose to "not recommend" up to three (3) crews of which they prefer to not have assigned to a post season game.

5. **COACHES RECRUITING OFFICIALS** - We need your continued help in recruiting new officials and providing them with opportunities to work so they can improve their skills. Coaches can help by encouraging graduating seniors to become officials. Officials should be encouraging all young officials to continue to study, develop and remain patient for varsity level experiences.

6. **COACHES' AND OFFICIALS' RESPONSIBILITIES** – The Referee and another official are to conduct a pre-game meeting with each head coach at the locker room of each team prior to taking the field for warm-up. Coaches have a responsibility to make themselves available for this meeting 1 hour before game time.

7. **OFFICIALS EVALUATIONS PROCEDURES** - Each head coach shall submit a rating for each official working his/her **VARSITY REGULAR SEASON CONTESTS (home and away)**. Officials are not rated for the post season contests. Schools are required to submit their ratings to renew their membership for the succeeding year. **It is recommended that coaches wait 24 hours after the game, but no longer than 72 hours to rate officials.** Officials ratings are completed through the MSHSAA Web Site. **Coaches, please submit your official's ratings online throughout the season (week by week) and not wait until the season has concluded.** Rate each official every time he/she officiates for you. If you play a nine game schedule you are responsible for evaluations of 45 officials (5man crew per game). Officials must give coaches their correct registration number and coaches must request this information from the officials. The MSHSAA Board of Directors requires the High School Athletic Director to verify that his/her school's fall sports officials ratings have been completed accurately by the respective head coach. **If a 5 rating has been given to an official, the head coach shall provide an explanation in writing as to why that rating was necessary.** Failure to submit ratings for a sport shall result in the school's program, for that sport(s), being placed on probation and could lead to a team **not** being assigned to participate in the MSHSAA district and state playoff series. Deadline for the submission of ratings is **November 15**. Schools that fail to submit the required official's ratings by the established deadline shall be issued a **\$25.00** late penalty fee and sent a reminder letter to the principal, giving the school until the end of the month to submit the required official's ratings. Schools that fail to submit the required official's ratings by the end of the month shall be placed on probation in the sport concerned by the MSHSAA Board of Directors and assessed a penalty fee of **\$100.00. (Total Fine \$125.00)**

8. **MSHSAA RULES ADOPTIONS:**

A. **LENGTH OF QUARTERS FOR JUNIOR HIGH and HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAMES** : 7th grade only - 8 minutes; 8th grade only - 8 minutes; 9th grade and/or JV – 12 minutes (or less if mutually agreed upon); Varsity - 12 minutes; teams of mixed grades(7th, 8th, 9th) - the limit for the lower grade shall apply (MSHSAA By-Law 3.29.9).

- B. **RUNNING CLOCK:** After the first half, any time the score differential reaches 35 points or more, for 11-man and 45 points or more, for 8-man, the following changes, and only these changes, will be made regarding rules determining when the clock will be stopped. The point differential applies to ALL levels. The clock will be stopped when:
1. An official's time-out is called, except:
 - a) when a first down is declared
 - b) following a change of team possession
 - c) to dry or change the game ball
 2. A charged time-out is called;
 3. At the end of a period;
 4. A score occurs.

NOTE: The clock will continue to run in all other situations.

NOTE: The use of this rule does not preclude the use of NFHS Rule 3-1-3 which reads: "A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining periods may be shortened at any time or the game terminated."

- C. **TIE-BREAKING PROCEDURE (Regular Season, Including District Games, and State Playoff Series):** For ALL varsity high school games (regular season and playoff contests) that end in a tie, at the end of regulation, play shall follow a "25-yard Overtime Procedure" to determine the winner. The procedure, as outlined in the National Federation Football Rules Book, will be followed with the following exceptions:
1. The ball will be placed on the 25-yard line.
 2. First and tens may be obtained to maintain possession. Once the line-to-gain has not been achieved the ball will be turned over to the defense.
- Lower Level Contests: Games contested below the senior high school varsity level (Junior Varsity, Freshman) that end in a tie at the end of regulation play, may utilize one (1) overtime period to break the tie if both coaches agree before the game. If a tie remains at the end of the one overtime period, then the contest will remain a tie. Combined 8th and 9th grade contests that end in a tie will remain a tie.
- D. **TRY DURING REGULAR SEASON GAMES (Week 1-9):** NFHS Rule 8-3-1 EXCEPTION states "If a touchdown is scored during the last down of the 4th period, the try shall not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying." **During games for Week 1 through 9 the TRY shall be attempted if the score-difference is 12 or less points when the winning team scores. It shall also be attempted if the score-difference is 14 or less points when the losing team scores.**
NOTE: This applies only to the 4th quarter, not to any overtime periods.
- E. **SUSPENDED GAME:** If a game is interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible authority (weather, lights, etc.), the game by rule shall be continued from the point of interruption unless the teams mutually agree to terminate the game with the existing score (a winner must be determined under this option).
- F. **ANY PLAYER OR COACH DISQUALIFIED (ejected) from an interscholastic football contest under NFHS Football Rule 9-4, 9-5 & 9-8:** A player who is ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct shall at a minimum be prohibited from playing in the next interscholastic contest at that same level. A coach who is ejected during a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct shall at a minimum be prohibited from coaching and attending the next interscholastic contest at the same level of which the ejection occurred, **as well as complete the NFHS Online Sportsmanship Course.**
- G. **COIN TOSS - All games:** The head coach and captain(s) (**NO MORE THAN 4 PLAYERS IN GAME UNIFORM**) shall attend the actual or simulated coin toss at the three minute mark at midfield. Honorary captains as approved by school administration are permitted at the coin toss. Honorary captains shall be dismissed from the coin toss at the same time as the coaches. All other team personnel must remain outside the field of play (NFHS Rule 3-2-2). This does not preclude having an early toss off the field followed by a simulation on the field three minutes prior to kickoff.
- H. **RECOGNITION AND EVALUATION OF THE ATHLETE WITH A CONCUSSION:**
1. Recognition of the signs and symptoms of a concussion is important. Every member of the team-athlete, teammates, coaches, parents or guardians, officials, athletic trainers, and team physicians have a duty to report a suspected concussion. Not all school districts have medical personnel available to cover every practice and competition; therefore, the coach is the person in the best position to protect the player and must be aware that not all student athletes will be forthcoming about their injury.
 2. An official shall not be responsible for making the diagnosis of a concussion. The official can assist coaches and medical staff by recognizing signs and symptoms of a concussion and informing the coach and medical staff of their concerns.
- I. **HEAT/HYDRATION-MANDATORY OFFICIALS TIMEOUTS:** Per NFHS Football Rule 3-5-7g, additional official's timeouts may be taken due to excessive heat/humidity which may create a health risk to players. **It is a MSHSAA Rules Adoption that a mandatory additional official's timeout must be issued at the half-way point of each quarter during ALL football games for the first four weeks of the season.** These additional official's timeouts shall be taken at the most natural break in play as possible. The mandated additional official's timeouts shall be taken during ALL football games beginning with **AUGUST 28** and ending **SEPTEMBER 18.**

BOARD POLICY FOR ON-SITE PROTESTS OF ATHLETIC CONTESTS

The Board of Directors adopted the following Policy, March, 1997, to address protests. The Board acknowledges that mistakes are made by officials in judgment and even sometimes in misapplication of game rules. However, the decisions rendered by officials at the contest site are to be final and any further process other than the one outlined below would not truly serve a useful purpose in the overall scope of high school athletics.

1. Within the procedures established within each individual sport rule code, the head coach must request a review of an official's application of a rule through appropriate channels.
2. If, after the review is complete, the coach still believes there has been a misapplication of a rule by a contest official(s), the coach shall then file a formal verbal protest with the game officials who will then notify the opposing coach immediately of the protest. A coach shall not protest a decision of judgment.
3. Following this notification of protest, the head coach shall be allowed approximately ten minutes to use his/her National Federation Rules Book, National Federation Case Book, MSHSAA Rules Meeting Announcements and/or MSHSAA Sport Manual to locate and show the game official(s) the appropriate rule reference which clarifies a misapplication of the game rule. If the head coach does not have personal copies of the above mentioned materials at the game site or the specific rule reference(s) or case book play(s) cannot be located within the maximum allowable ten minutes, the protest shall automatically be disallowed and the game shall continue from the point of interruption. If a rule reference(s) or case book play(s) is found that indicates a misapplication of a rule has occurred, the official's decision shall be corrected at that time before any further action occurs, and the contest shall be resumed from the point of interruption after the correction as provided in the contest rules. When appropriate, the game officials may assist the head coach in locating appropriate rule and case book references.
4. All protests shall be resolved at the contest site before any further game action occurs.
5. Protests that are not filed in a timely manner by that sport rule code shall be automatically disallowed.
6. The MSHSAA Board of Directors and/or Staff shall not review contest protests.

APPLICATION OF PROTEST PROCEDURE

- A. **Introduction:** Protests rarely occur and the new protest procedure policy is not intended to increase the frequency of protests. It is however, intended to resolve the protest on site. For this to occur the following must take place:
 1. Coaches and Officials must be professional with each other. This should be a non-confrontational conference.
 2. As stated above, protests involve application of rules only -- not judgment calls. (Examples of items which could be protested: Football -- penalizing 5 yards instead of 15 yards; Wrestling -- allowing 1 minute for injury time instead of 2 minutes; Softball -- allowing only two charged defensive conferences instead of three.) (Examples of items that could not be protested: Football -- pass interference; Wrestling -- stalling; Softball -- out or safe calls.)
 3. **GET IT RIGHT!** If the official has made a mistake; admit it, correct it and move on.
Contest officials and the head coach filing the official protest shall notify the MSHSAA Office in writing of any contest in which an official protest has occurred and the resolution of that protest. The MSHSAA Special Report Forms shall be used for this purpose.
- B. **Process.**
 1. Once a head coach has filed a formal verbal protest with the game officials, they shall then notify the opposing head coach of the protest and the playing field, court, mat, etc. shall be cleared of all participants and they shall report to their respective team bench areas.
 2. The head coach shall then be allowed approximately ten minutes to locate specific rule references from the National Federation Rules Book, National Federation Case Book, MSHSAA Rules Meeting Announcements and/or MSHSAA Sport Manual to substantiate the claim that a misapplication of a game rule has occurred. The game officials shall also confer among themselves during the period to address the claim of the coach as to the potential rule misapplication.
 3. If the head coach is able to produce rule evidence from the above mentioned sources to support the claim of a misapplication of a game rule, the officials shall correct the error as provided in the contest rules and the contest shall proceed from the point of interruption. If the head coach cannot produce the evidence, the protest shall be disallowed and the contest shall continue from the point of interruption. The previously mentioned materials must be immediately available for review at the playing field sideline, court-side, mat-side etc. (Time shall not be provided to go to a locker room, team bus, coach's office, etc.)
 4. Once the final decision regarding the protest has been rendered, the game officials shall provide the participants sufficient opportunity to warm-up before the contest is resumed.

2020 FOOTBALL MECHANICS AND PROCEDURES

This section is to clarify areas of football mechanics and procedures where vague or no specific direction is presented by the NFHS.

1. **MEETING WITH HEAD COACHES** – The Referee and another game official, dressed in game uniform, should visit each head coach in their team's dressing room. Visit with the home team coach one hour prior to game time and then visit with the visiting coach thereafter.
2. **WIRELESS CREW COMMUNICATION DEVICES:** Wireless Communication Devices are for "VARSITY" football games ONLY. The wireless crew communication devices are not permitted for use by officials who are officiating lower level games. (Restricted Contests: JV, freshmen, 8th and 7th grade contests). SEE GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS DOCUMENT INCLUDED IN YOUR RULES BOOK MAILING FOR OFFICIALS.
3. **WIRELESS COMMUNICATION-INTERACTIVE TRAINING DEVICE (CITD): Purpose:** To permit an educational and training experience for beginning officials in which timely and immediate feedback can be received in regards to position and mechanics during a contest. For purposes of the MSHSAA Wireless Communication-Interactive Training Device, the CITD is defined as a two way radio with an attached earpiece and push to talk microphone. Other communication devices are prohibited. The CITD may only be used at 7th, 8th and 9th grade contests. Furthermore, trainers and officials may use CITD's at any school's practice/inter squad scrimmage in which an official(s) are invited to participate. SEE GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS DOCUMENT INCLUDED IN YOUR RULES BOOK MAILING FOR OFFICIALS.
4. **2nd Half Choice Procedure-MSHSAA 2nd Half Mechanic Adoption:** After completing the "Entering The Field" procedure after halftime, the crew will be located in their same positions as they were located for the coin toss to start the game. Communication regarding the second half choice will be done by the Referee and Umpire at the fifty yard line from their sidelines. The Referee or Umpire, depending on which team has the second half choice, will confer with the "Head Coach" of the second half choosing team as to their choice to begin the second half. After securing the second half choice from the head coach, the Referee/Umpire will give a subtle signal of the choice selected to the Referee/Umpire on the opposite sideline. The Referee/Umpire will then relay to the opposing coach the choice selected by the second half choosing coach, at this time the opposing coach will decide on his choice that remains. The Referee/Umpire will then relay back to the Referee/Umpire a subtle signal of the option selected by the opposing coach. Begin second half. Note: "Varsity" football crews officiating "varsity" contests that choose to use the approved Wireless Crew Communication Devices are permitted to use the devices to forego the subtle signaling of 2nd half choices.
5. **GAME BALL/BALL BOYS/MANAGERS** – After the game balls from each team are approved by the Referee, the Line Judge is to secure the ball with the ball boys. It is preferred that ball boys from both teams are placed on the line judge's sideline; however, it is permissible to use a ball boy(s) on each team's respective sideline. Ball boys and managers should never be on the field of play. Managers or ball boys shall not be allowed to retrieve the kicking tee.
6. **COIN TOSS** – The coin toss or simulated coin toss will take place in the center of the field 3 minutes prior to game time, with not more than four team members in game uniform(captains) from each team. The walk to centerfield is part of the coin toss; therefore, the walk begins at 3 minutes prior to game time. Honorary personnel, approved by the school administration, may be present at the start of the coin toss procedures but must leave the field at the same time the coaches are dismissed. If both teams agree to an early coin toss it shall not take place on the playing field but will be simulated in the center of the field 3 minutes prior to game time. The Referee, Umpire, Line Judge, and Back Judge shall escort the team captains and head coaches toward the center of the field starting from the sideline at 3 minutes prior to game time, with Line Judge and Back Judge stopping at the hash marks and facing the sidelines. The Referee should have his back to the clock during the coin toss. The captains should be closest to the Referee with the head coaches closest to the Umpire. The coin should be tossed, caught and displayed without turning the coin over onto the top of the wrist/hand. The coin shall not be allowed to hit the ground. **If the winner of the toss defers, signal #10 is given prior to asking the other captain his "choice". Since "defer" is an option and not a choice, if the captain winning the toss defers, the other team's captain becomes the "first choosing captain". The Referee concludes the coin toss by signaling only the choice of the first choosing captain.**

2020 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

DEFINING TEAM DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE FOR PENALTY DECISIONS [1-4-1, 1-4-4 (NEW), 2-32-5, 3-5-2, 10-1-1, 10-1-2, 10-2-4]

Rationale: Prior to the game, the Head Coach will notify the referee of the designated representative (Coach or Player) who will make decisions regarding penalty acceptance or declination.

HALFTIME INTERMISSION OPTION FOLLOWING WEATHER DELAY [Table 3-1 NOTES 2 (NEW)]

Rationale: The halftime intermission may be shortened by mutual agreement of opposing coaches if a weather delay occurs during the last three minutes of the second period.

40-SECOND PLAY CLOCK CLARIFICATION [3-6-1a(1)e EXCEPTIONS 2 and 3 (NEW)]

Rationale: To eliminate a potential timing advantage gained by the defensive team, the rules committee approved the play clock being set to 40 seconds when an Officials' time-out is taken for an injury to a defensive player or a defensive player has an equipment issue.

25-SECOND PLAY CLOCK CLARIFICATION [3-6-1a(1)f (NEW)]

Rationale: Following a legal kick when either team is awarded a new series, the play clock will be set to 25 seconds.

DISCONCERTING ACT PENALTY RECLASSIFIED [7-1-9 (NEW), 7-1-9 PENALTY (NEW), 9-5-1d]

Rationale:

Disconcerting acts or words by the defense has been reclassified from a 15-yard unsporting foul to a 5-yard foul.

SPIKING THE BALL TO CONSERVE TIME (7-5-2 EXCEPTION)

Rationale: The exception to allow a player to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball forward to the ground immediately after receiving the snap, has been expanded to include any player positioned directly behind the center. This exception now includes snaps that are NOT hand-to-hand.

2020 NFHS FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Sportsmanship

Intentional Grounding

Ineligible Downfield and Line of Scrimmage Formation

2020-2022 NFHS FOOTBALL GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

NOTE: Mechanics Manuals for Officials are published on a two year print cycle

Clock Management Communication

Accurate and effective communication during the game is critically important for the game officials, coaches, players and the press box personnel. Recent NFHS football rules change(s) that impact clock management issues call for careful consideration of the necessary changes for game officials to correctly communicate important information throughout the contest – especially during critical game situations when the clock issues are very important. Game officials must utilize sound and effective mechanics throughout the entire game to ensure that they are adequately prepared when the game situations call for critical decisions to be made by the coaches and players. One very important change that is a result of the new 40-, 25-second play clock is that the covering official(s) must utilize a physical signal that is clearly visible at the end of every down. The most common signals that are necessary when the ball becomes dead include Signal No. 7 (dead ball with one arm straight up) or Signal No. 3 (stops the game clock) or Signal No. 10 (incomplete forward pass). A down that involves a score would involve another appropriate signal as well. Please note that the result of any down only calls for one signal to be used. Coaches, players, clock operators and the other game officials depend on this important information to make critical decisions that sometimes must be made very quickly. A game officials crew that has developed effective and consistent habits to clearly communicate this important information throughout the contest is thoroughly prepared when critical game situations call for quick decisions. Effective clock management becomes a shared crew responsibility when each member of the crew learns the correct signals and is prepared to utilize them in an accurate and consistent manner. Game official crews that are assigned to work a game where visible play clocks are not available on occasion or all of the time are likely to be familiar with the local association/ state mechanic that is recommended for use when the play clock has reached the 10-second mark and then the 5-second mark. It is the recommendation of the NFHS Football Game Officials Manual Committee that a clearly visible physical signal must occur when the play clock reaches 10 seconds and that an additional signal is necessary at the 5-second mark to count down the final seconds prior to the possibility of a delay of game foul. The game official who is responsible for this signal might choose to visit with both quarterbacks prior to the game to allow them to clarify any questions or information they may have concerning this mechanic.

Respectful Communication Between Coaches and Game Officials

If the primary mission of high school football was to win state championships then, by design, 99 percent of all teams would never fulfill the goal. If winning games was the primary goal then, for sure, 50 percent of teams would never be fulfilling the goal. All NFHS sports rules books include a "Mission Statement" (Appendix A in the NFHS Football Rules Book) that clearly states the primary goals as promoting "leadership, respect, integrity and sportsmanship." To that end, coaches and game officials should always be communicating with each other in a manner that models such behaviors for the student-athletes. Guidelines to model such communication is always included as Appendix F (for Coaches) and Appendix G (for Officials) in the NFHS Football Rules Book.

NFHS Football Rule 9-8-1 states that it is unsportsmanlike conduct and thereby clearly illegal for any non-player (coach) to “attempt to influence a decision by a game official

l” such as screaming for holding by a defensive coach over and over, or consistently asking for a pass interference call by an offensive coach. The rule further defines that it is unsportsmanlike conduct to “indicate an objection to a game official’s decision.” While it is likely not appropriate to be calling such a foul unless it is an extreme case, game officials and coaches need to keep in mind that young student-athletes are watching their every move. If a coach disagrees with a decision, he or she should be requesting a “conference time-out” and respectfully presenting his or her case. Note that this procedure calls for both coach and game officials to discuss any disagreement specifically “in front of the team bench” (as a learning opportunity for players to see how adults respectfully speak with other adults) as opposed to some secret screaming session in the middle of the field. If they are not sure enough about their position to risk a time-out, then they need to abide by NFHS Football Rule 9-8-1.

Preventing Inequities Due to Illegal Substitution and/or Illegal Formation

After the ready-for-play, each A player who participated in the previous down and each A substitute must have been, momentarily, between the 9-yard marks before the snap. (Rule 7-2-1) With the newly revised definition for the “ready-for-play,” a “wide out” type substitute can gain the advantage of being unnoticed and uncovered or even in illegal position if game officials do not consistently recognize whether or not the players are all abiding by this NFHS football rule. The ready-for-play may be a signal given by the referee. However, with the new rule it may also be initiated by the umpire placing the ball on the ground and moving into position. It only takes one instance for a receiver to go uncovered for A to gain the advantage of a long reception or even a score. Game officials need to be especially conscious of the position of outside substitutes when either type ready for play occurs. Wing officials should be especially alert for substitution issues.

Responsibility for Minimizing Risk in the Game

It is so very important to understand that the school administrators, coaches, players and non-players, and game officials are equally responsible for minimizing the risk in the game of football! It is quite clear that there have been many NFHS football rules changes recently that directly address risk minimization of the participants. The purpose of this Point of Emphasis is to encourage all game officials to carefully study these NFHS rules of the game for football and prepare themselves to make appropriate decisions throughout the game that address this area of concern. It is very important to always remember that a decision to not throw a flag for a risk minimization-related foul sends a very clear message that the game official approves of the action by the player(s) and is likely to see the same foul repeated. Game officials should take the time to carefully study the items listed below and prepare to react appropriately in each and every game. **Every game official must take responsibility for minimizing the risk of all participants in high school football.**

NFHS Football Rule 9 clearly addresses the conduct of all participants, and Sections 3 and 4 specifically deal with physical contact between players that may result in these risk concerns. Let’s look at several specific examples. Please note that this list is not all-inclusive:

Targeting is defined as “an act by any player who takes aim and initiates contact against an opponent above the shoulders with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulder(s).” Any player who is in complete control of himself (not fighting off a block) must be held to a very high standard when making this contact against an opponent. We simply cannot miss or pass on this type of foul in an effort to protect both players. Remember that a targeting foul does not result in automatic disqualification, but that certainly can be a consideration.

Blindside Block is defined as “a block against an opponent other than the runner, who is not able to see the blocker approaching.” This action that includes forceful contact clearly results in a foul unless the block outside of the free-blocking zone is initiated with open hands (open palms to the opponent).

Tripping is defined as “the intentional use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knee.” It must be noted here that a player may not trip any opponent (includes the runner). It is also important to note here that an injury to both players is certainly possible.

Defenseless Player is defined as “a player who, because of his physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury.” It must be noted here that physical contact against a defenseless player may very well be perfectly legal, but any player must take extreme care to make certain that the contact is legal by rule to avoid a foul. Game officials must carefully observe any defenseless player to determine that the contact by an opponent is legal. It is also necessary to note here that unnecessary or excessive contact may very well occur.

Illegal Helmet Contact is defined as “an act of initiating contact with the helmet against any opponent.” It is important to note here that a helmet is to be used for protection and not to be used as a weapon.

Spearing is “an act by any player who initiates contact against an opponent at the shoulders or below with the crown (top portion) of his helmet,” and is likely to be the most common example of illegal helmet contact.

Roughing an opponent may include action against a passer, a kicker, a holder or a snapper. Each of these players are certainly in a vulnerable position at a critical moment and clearly must be protected.